

Women Encountering Jesus- Lesson #1: The Pregnant Virgin Mary

What are some ways we are called to serve God?

How do you know if you are ready to serve? How do you prepare?

In this first lesson we are going to explore how God uses us... can use any of us to accomplish His goals/His mission

- Jesus' first encounter with a woman sets the stage for his entire ministry.
- Jesus is not interested in the lofty/self-important/important. He isn't interested in those who are powerful, attractive, popular, wealthy
- Nope- Jesus' power is perfected in weakness. II Corinthians 12:9

Read Text: Matthew 1:18ff

Luke 1:26 through Chapter 2

Background:

In Jewish culture there were three steps to the marriage process:

1. Two families agreed on the union.
2. There was a public announcement. At this point the couple was betrothed and the only way the relationship could end was through death or divorce. However, they didn't live together or have sex yet.
3. The actual wedding- at this point, the couple lived together, etc...

What could have been:

Read Deuteronomy 22:23-24

- Joseph was righteous. This meant that he was zealous in keeping the law.
 - o He could have had Mary judged publicly and stoned
 - o He could have rejected her
 - If he did this, there would be enormous pressure on Mary's family to also reject her... which would have led to a life of begging and prostitution for her and her child.
 - o Joseph decided to be magnanimous and just quietly divorce her... until God intervened.
 - o He ended up marrying Mary but not consummating their marriage until after Jesus was born.

What this meant for Mary:

- Either way, Mary would have endured the pain of ridicule. Surely, everyone in their small town knew that she was pregnant before the wedding. Surely there would be a social stigma that would always follow Mary-
 - o The one who got pregnant out of wedlock.
 - o Better watch her around your husband. You never know?
 - o Isn't she lucky that Joseph didn't turn her out?
 - o I wonder who Jesus' father really is?
- Can you imagine?
 - o The gossip
 - o The looks
 - o The shame

Sidebar question for discussion—what are some ways we shame fellow Christians who we think messed up? Do we ever judge without knowing the entire story?

Mary's reaction to all of this!

1. Mary Believed!
2. Mary had faith!
3. Mary submitted to God's will.

Was this easy? No!!!

- Mary was probably, what? 15, 16 years old?
- The scripture says she was confused and disturbed.
- The angel Gabriel came to her and passed the message from God that she should not be afraid. Seriously though, what would you have thought if it were you?

Why did God choose Mary?

- Young
- Poor
- Female
- Small town
- No position
- ***save her lineage

***Mary was seemingly unsuitable but God chose her for a major task--- possibly one of the most major tasks ever! ... and she obeyed him!

Points to Ponder:

***Mary was the first person to accept Jesus on his own terms, regardless of personal cost.

***Our culture venerates Mary now with Statues, icons, etc... but no one was venerating her during Jesus' birth, life, and death.

***With God's call to service, Mary was facing a hard life.

***God's favor does not bring success or fame.

- Why is that?
- How do we prepare for that?

Application Questions:

- 1. You may feel unworthy or unlikely for God's service, but God can use you if you trust Him!**
 - a. What causes us to feel unworthy or unlikely?**

- 2. Don't limit God's choices.**
 - a. God often shows us there are more options available than we think there are (Joseph).**

Write down one area of service or something you feel called to do but haven't yet because 'X' is holding you back.

What is one concrete action you could take to enable this?